



Trooper Jimmie E. "Jim" Linegar

Badge #865
10-42 ... April 15, 1985

On April 15, 1985, Trooper Jim Linegar and I had lunch together. We talked about work and families. He told me about an outing he and his family had gone on the day before, and we had some good laughs. We decided to have a spot check on U.S. Highway 65 and MO Highway 86, south of Branson. It was a beautiful spring day and very quiet.

Jim and I drove to the spotcheck and started checking cars. He was checking eastbound traffic and I checked the westbound vehicle on MO 86, just west of U.S. 65. I saw Jim talking to the driver of a brown van, and then saw the van pull to the shoulder and stop. Jim got in my patrol car to use the radio. I overheard some traffic with Troop D, then Jim motioned for me to come to the car. He showed me an Oregon driver's license with the name, "Matthew Mark Samuels". He told me there was a possible "hit" on someone using the name as an alias, but he didn't think it was the correct person. He also indicated we needed to check it out.

Jim approached the driver's side and I came up the passenger's side. I looked in to see the same face that appeared on the driver's license. There was camping gear and a large dog in the van. The van had a Nevada license plate that was not on file in the computer.

As I looked into the van, I heard Jim ask the driver, "Is this your van?"

The driver said, "No."

Jim then asked, "Whose van is it?"

The driver said, "A friend's."

You must understand that in the spring in Branson it is not unusual for people to go camping with friends from other parts of the country, nor would it be unusual for them to drive their friend's vehicle.

Jim then asked, "What's your friend's name?"

The driver said, "I don't remember. I don't know him that well."

Jim immediately told the driver to step out of the van. I saw the driver turn and open the door. As he did, I started to the back of the van where Jim would bring the driver. As I started toward the rear, I heard a short burst of automatic weapons fire, followed almost immediately by a second longer burst. I ran to the back of the van.

When I looked toward the front, the driver, David C. Tate, appeared and fired another burst down the side of the van. I ducked behind the van, and then fired two shots down the side of the van to keep him from following me. I then dived onto the ground, with my head under the



The Linegar family proudly holds a Trooper Jimmie Linegar Memorial Highway sign prior to it being placed near a portion of U.S. Highway 65 renamed as such on October 8, 2003. Pictured from left to right are Huey Linegar, Sandy Linegar Webb, Michael Linegar, Lucy Linegar, Jennifer Linegar, and H. Bill Linegar.

rear of the van. I saw Tate's feet at the front, and fired two more shots under the van. He shouted, and jumped up on the front bumper. He came down in an area where my vision was blocked by the left front tire and the rear-end housing. I waited for what seemed like an eternity. I couldn't see Jim and I didn't know where he was.

After a few seconds, I scooted over and saw Tate running east on MO 86. I got to the left rear corner of the van and fired the other two shots from my revolver. Tate was still running away when I turned to look for Jim. He was about eight feet behind the van, face down. He had made it to where Tate could not see him. As a result, Tate did not know if there were one or two of us shooting at him.

Checking Jim, I realized he was badly wounded. I ran to the patrol car and radioed for help. Tate crossed US 65, and

went down into a deep ravine, out of sight.

I went back to Jim, giving him first aid and CPR until Lt. Bob Matthews arrived. We continued until Branson Police Chief Steve Medford and Taney County Deputy Chip Mason relieved us. The ambulances, helicopter, and other officers arrived. A weeklong manhunt started that would involve many, many police agencies from several states as well as the Missouri National Guard and other federal agencies.

Jim was pronounced dead at Skaggs Hospital in Branson. I was treated for three gunshot wounds and released the next day.

David Tate was at large from Monday, April 15, to Saturday, April 20. After a citizen reported seeing someone acting strangely near the lake, Tate was captured and taken into custody just before sunset, near Forsyth, MO. Tate was tried

in Boone County for the murder of Tpr. Jimmie E. Linegar. Being found guilty, he was sentenced to life in prison. He was also tried for armed criminal action and first degree assault. He was given a second life sentence plus 15 years, to be served consecutively.

Now, to the things many people don't know. Who was Jimmie Linegar? He was nearly a five-year veteran of the Missouri State Highway Patrol with another five years of police experience with the Lebanon Police Department.

In 26 years, I have worked with many police officers, but Jim Linegar was one of the best. He was always thinking about how to do things better and safer. He always wore his protective vest, as he did that day. The fatal round entered the side where the vests do not cover.

Jim was a Christian and knew what was important. Jim and his family were faithful to their church. Jim was a family man and they were always a topic of conversation. He was proud of his family. His daughter, Jennifer, and son, Michael, were the pride of his life. They would meet us in the evening at McDonald's at what was then Lakeview (now, Branson West), and eat with us when we were working. He always had time for them. It was obvious to anyone that his wife and children were the joy of his life.

Jim was also a person who loved to hunt. He would go to Lockwood and hunt anytime he got the chance. He loved to just get out into the open and relax. Jim was a good friend. He was the kind of person you could talk to about important things. He would always listen. When you needed help on the job he was always there. He was the kind of officer you didn't have to call to come to assist you with an accident. If he wasn't busy, he was there to help.

Jim also had a great sense of humor. He was always in on the jokes in the zone. Oftentimes, he would be the target of those jokes. As the youngest member of Zone 4, he had to have a good sense of humor ... or else.

Jim left a wife, Sandy, who has worked with other families who have lost a loved one in the line of duty. He left a daughter, Jennifer, then 5. *(She has grown into a beautiful young woman who attended Jim's alma mater, SMSU, in Springfield.)* He also left behind a son, Michael, then 3. *(Michael attended Jim's alma mater, and is a member of the 85th Recruit Class.)* Both have grown into the kind of young people of whom Jim would be proud. Michael has many of his father's mannerisms. I'm certain that he will be as fine a man as his father.

Why did those things happen on April 15, 1985? I still don't know, but I know Jim is in Heaven and has no more questions. That gives me some comfort. I also know what David Tate did, he did of his own free will and God did not cause those events to take place. I know that as tragic as the events of that day were, some good things did happen in the aftermath. Many of those positive outcomes happened because of the kind of man Jim Linegar was and the kind of life he lived.

He was a very, very good friend.

(Troop D's Sgt. Allen D. Hines wrote this article to remember Tpr. Jim Linegar on the 15th anniversary of his death. It was originally printed in the April 2000 issue of the Patrol News. Tpr. Linegar's as-sailant is serving a life sentence without parole. Sgt. Allen D. Hines retired on May 1, 2001. In 2003, a portion of U.S. Highway 65 between Missouri Highway 265 and the Missouri-Arkansas line was designated the Trooper Jimmie Linegar Memorial Highway.)